

Forth he fared at the fated moment,
 sturdy Scyld to the shelter of God.
 Then they bore him over to ocean's billow,
 loving clansmen, as late he charged them,
 while wielded words the winsome Scyld,
 the leader belovéd who long had ruled. . . .
 In the roadstead rocked a ring-dight vessel,
 ice-flecked, outbound, atheling's barge:
 there laid they down their darling lord
 on the breast of the boat, the breaker-of-rings,^a
 by the mast the mighty one. Many a treasure
 fetched from far was freighted with him.
 No ship have I known so nobly dight
 with weapons of war and weeds of battle,
 with breastplate and blade: on his bosom lay
 a heapéd hoard that hence should go
 far o'er the flood with him floating away.
 No less these loaded the lordly gifts,
 thanes' huge treasure, than those had done
 who in former time forth had sent him
 sole on the seas, a suckling child.
 High o'er his head they hoist the standard,
 a gold-wove banner; let billows take him,
 gave him to ocean. Grave were their spirits,
 mournful their mood. No man is able
 to say in sooth, no son of the halls,
 no hero 'neath heaven,—who harbored that freight!

I

Now Beowulf bode in the burg of the Scyldings,
 leader belovéd, and long he ruled
 in fame with all folk, since his father had gone
 away from the world, till awoke an heir,
 haughty Healfdene, who held through life,
 sage and sturdy, the Scyldings glad.
 Then, one after one, there woke to him,
 to the chieftain of clansmen, children four:

^a Kenning for king or chieftain of a *comitatus*: he breaks off gold from the spiral rings—often worn on the arm—and so rewards his followers.





Chanson de Roland
From the painting by Gaston Bussiere

THE HARVARD CLASSICS
EDITED BY CHARLES W ELIOT LL D



EPIC AND SAGA

BEOWULF

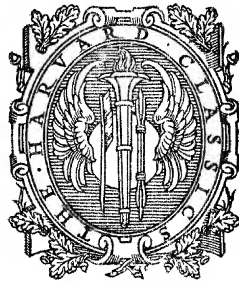
THE SONG OF ROLAND

THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL

THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS

AND NIBLUNGS

WITH INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES
AND ILLUSTRATIONS



"DR ELIOT'S FIVE-FOOT SHELF OF BOOKS"

P F COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

Copyright 1910
By P. F. COLLIER & SON

"Beowulf" is published by special arrangement with
Professor Francis B. Gummere

Copyright 1909
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| BEOWULF | PAGE 5 |
| TRANSLATED BY FRANCIS B. GUMMERE | |
| THE SONG OF ROLAND | |
| PART I—THE TREASON OF GANELON | 97 |
| PART II—THE PRELUDE OF THE GREAT BATTLE | 133 |
| PART III—THE REPRISALS | 185 |
| TRANSLATED BY JOHN O'HAGAN | |
| THE DESTRUCTION OF DÁ DERGA'S HOSTEL | 211 |
| TRANSLATED BY WHITLEY STOKES, D.C.L. | |
| THE STORY OF THE VOLSUNGS AND NIBLUNGS | 265 |
| TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE | 266 |
| THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO ARE MOST NOTEWORTHY IN THIS STORY | 270 |
| A PROLOGUE IN VERSE | 272 |
| TRANSLATED BY EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON AND WILLIAM MORRIS | |
| SONGS FROM THE ELDER EDDA | |
| PART OF THE SECOND LAY OF HELGI HUNDING'S-BANE | 385 |
| PART OF THE LAY OF SIGDRIFA | 393 |
| THE LAY CALLED THE SHORT LAY OF SIGURD | 396 |
| VOL. XLIX—HC (1) | 1 |

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| THE HELL-RIDE OF BRYNHILD | 413 |
| FRAGMENTS OF THE LAY OF BRYNHILD | 417 |
| THE SECOND OR ANCIENT LAY OF GUDRUN | 422 |
| THE SONG OF ATLI | 433 |
| THE WHETTING OF GUDRUN | 444 |
| THE LAY OF HAMDIR | 450 |
| THE LAMENT OF ODDRUN | 457 |

TRANSLATED BY EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON AND WILLIAM MORRIS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

WHEN our Teutonic ancestors migrated to Britain from the Continent of Europe, they brought with them the heroic songs in which their minstrels were accustomed to celebrate the deeds of their kings and warriors. In Section xvi of "Beowulf" will be found a short description of the recitation at a feast of this kind of lay. Perhaps as early as the seventh century of our era, after the introduction of Christianity, an unknown poet gathered material from these lays and composed the epic of "Beowulf." Besides the stories, he took from the older songs their metrical form and many features of style; but how far he retained their actual language there is no longer any means of knowing. A good deal of comment and reflection he must have added; and the structure of the epic is certainly due to him. He did not sing or chant to a harp as his predecessors in the treatment of this material had done; he wrote a book to be read. "Beowulf" is thus not folk-song, but belongs to a much more conscious and developed stage of art than the popular ballad.

The exploits narrated in the poem belong to the life of Germanic peoples before they crossed the North Sea, and at least one of the characters can be identified with a historical personage. Hygelac was the Danish king Chochilaicus, who was killed in a raid into the countries near the mouth of the Rhine, not far from 520 A.D.; and as he was the uncle of Beowulf, this fixes approximately the date for the historical prototype of our hero. But the events of the poem are legendary, not historic. The fights with monsters and dragons, which occupy so much of the poem, are clear evidence of the large extent to which the marvels of popular tradition had attached themselves to figures whose historical identity had already become shadowy. Some scholars have even tried to interpret the persons and events of the poem as mythology; and while one can not deny that mythical elements may have become interwoven, yet the poet believed his hero to be thoroughly human, and his foes to be such ghosts and monsters as are still believed in by the peasantry in many parts of Europe.

From Professor Gummere's translation, which preserves with great skill the essential metrical features of the original, accent

and alliteration, one can get a good idea of the rhythmic vigor of the old English. The translation is made from the solitary text which has come down to us, a manuscript of the tenth century, now in the British Museum.

Although, as has been said, the chief materials of the poem must have come from the Continent, much of the detail giving a picture of life at an old Germanic court is likely to have been drawn from the England of the writer's own day. "Beowulf" thus comes to have, in addition to its interest as the earliest extended imaginative work extant among the Teutonic peoples, a special value for the light it throws on the culture and ideals of character prevalent during the first centuries of the English occupation of Britain.

BEOWULF

TRANSLATED BY
FRANCIS B. GUMMERE

PRELUDE OF THE FOUNDER OF THE DANISH HOUSE

LO, praise of the prowess of people-kings
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,
we have heard, and what honor the athelings
won!

Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
awing the earls. Since erst he lay
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,
till before him the folk, both far and near,
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,
gave him gifts: a good king he!
To him an heir was afterward born,
a son in his halls, whom heaven sent
to favor the folk, feeling their woe
that erst they had lacked an earl for leader
so long a while; the Lord endowed him,
the Wielder of Wonder, with world's renown.
Famed was this Beowulf:¹ far flew the boast of him,
son of Scyld, in the Scandian lands.
So becomes it a youth to quit him well
with his father's friends, by fee and gift,
that to aid him, aged, in after days,
come warriors willing, should war draw nigh,
liegemen loyal: by lauded deeds
shall an earl have honor in every clan.

¹ Not, of course, Beowulf the Great, hero of the epic.